

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-52. (Cancelled)

53. (Currently Amended) A process for the production of a fermented dairy product comprising the steps of:

(i) contacting a food material with a stabiliser to provide a food intermediate;

(i)(a) pasteurising the food intermediate;

(i)(b) inoculating the food intermediate; and

(ii) fermenting the food intermediate;

~~(i) contacting a food material with a stabiliser to provide a food intermediate; and~~

~~(ii) fermenting the food intermediate;~~

wherein the stabiliser is present in an amount of 0.3 to 3.0 wt%, and comprises a depolymerised pectin and wherein the food material comprises a milk protein.

Claims 54-56. (Canceled)

57. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 further comprising the step of (iii) pasteurising the product of step (ii).

58. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 further comprising the step of (iv) adding juice and/or acid to the product of step (i)(b) and/or to the product of step (ii) and/or to the product of step (iii).

59. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a viscosity at 25°C in a 5% solution of 15 cP to 400 cP.

60. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a viscosity at 25°C in a 5% solution of 20 cP to 200 cP.

61. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a viscosity at 25°C in a 5% solution of 25 cP to 50 cP.

62. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin is an essentially linear carbohydrate polymer.

63. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a galacturonic acid content of at least 65%.

64. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a degree of esterification of at least 50%.

65. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a degree of esterification of from 50 to 85%.

66. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a degree of esterification of from 65 to 75%.

67. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a degree of esterification of less than 50%.

68. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin has a degree of esterification of from 20 to 50%.

69. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the food material further comprises a protein of vegetable and/or microbial origin.

70. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the food material comprises milk.

71. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 70 wherein the milk has a milk solid non-fat content of 0.1 to 25 wt%.

72. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 70 wherein the milk is whole fat milk or partially defatted milk.

73. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the milk protein has been isolated as a protein powder or protein isolate.

Claims 74-80. (Canceled)

81. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermentation step (ii) takes place at a temperature of from 30 to 50°C.

82. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermentation step (ii) takes place over a period of 2 to 48 hours.

83. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 57 wherein the pasteurising step (iii) takes place at a temperature of at least 80°C.

84. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 57 wherein the pasteurising step (iii) takes place over a period of 5 to 30 seconds.

85. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product is a beverage.

86. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product is a fermented milk drink.

87. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product is a yoghurt drink.

88. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product is a drinking yoghurt drink.

89. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product is a stirred yoghurt.

90. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product contains a live food-grade micro-organism in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.03 wt%.

Claim 91. (Canceled)

92. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the fermented dairy product has a pH of less than 4.6.

Claims 93-95. (Cancelled)

96. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the depolymerised pectin is amidated.

97. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the stabiliser comprises a blend of two or more depolymerised pectins.

98. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the stabiliser comprises a blend of a HE depolymerised pectin and a LE depolymerised pectin.

99. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the stabiliser comprises a blend of a LE amidated depolymerised pectin and a HE depolymerised pectin.

100. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the stabiliser further comprises a high molecular weight pectin.

101. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 53 wherein the stabiliser comprises a HE depolymerised pectin and a high molecular weight pectin.

102. (Previously Presented) A fermented dairy product obtained or obtainable by the process of claim 53.

103. (Previously Presented) A process for improving the texture and/or viscosity of a fermented dairy product, comprising including a stabiliser in said fermented dairy product, wherein the stabiliser comprises a depolymerised pectin, and wherein said stabiliser is applied directly to the dairy product prior to fermentation.

104. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 103 wherein the stabiliser further comprises a high molecular weight, high ester pectin.

Claims 105-111. (Canceled)